726 (764) with leaves and branches and crawling upon the ground, can be witnessed even today at Mossi funerals where men re-enact warfare practices. Whenever possible, the Mossi preferred to take the enemy by surprise, but this was seldom possible when large-scale fighting and massive preparations were involved.

When two Mossi armies drew up to each other, the heralds from both sides issued such challenges and epithets as: "If you men do not wish to die, you should run or you will never eat again. We will have your blood to wash with." In the meantime, the Tansobadamba on both sides deployed their forces in accordance with the number of men available, the spirit of (723) the enemy, and the nature of the terrain. From the description of warfare given to me by an old Tansoba in Nobere district, it appears that the strategy most commonly used was to split the infantry in two while attacking, thus making room for the cavalry to charge through. If the initial charge was successful, the attack was maintained, but if it failed, the army usually turned about and fled. Despite their braggadocio, Mossi commanders seldom insisted that their troops fight against overwhelming odds. (644) However, shame over impending defeat often induced such officers as the (645) Tansoba and the Gounga Naba to fight to the death. For example, during the war between Boulsa and Fada-N'Gourma in 1897, the Boulsa army lost so many men that the Boulsa Dim wanted to commit suicide in his humiliation. However, he was prevented from doing so by one of his subordinates.[27]

Soldiers wounded by poisoned spears or arrows extracted the projectiles if possible, and kept on fighting until they died. Even if they were wounded (789) by an unpoisoned weapon, they did not seek medical aid. Most wounded men believed that they were doomed, because their protective amulets had (727) failed them. For the same reason, a defeated army fleeing a battlefield made no attempt to retrieve its dead and dying, but left them to the vultures. When an army was victorious, however, the Mossi either carried their dead home for burial or buried them on the battlefield, saving some item of their clothing or equipment for the funeral.

Victorious Mossi armies usually pursued the enemy, burning villages as (648) they went. The soldiers killed all the infants and the infirm, and when they (567) fought against non-Mossi, they captured young people to be sold as slaves. Then they collected all the available booty and departed hurriedly, fearing (727) that the confiscated cattle and slaves would slow their return and enable the rallied enemy to catch up with them.[28] If the army could not return home before dark, camp was set up for the night near a body of water so that the Tansobadamba could offer thanksgiving sacrifices. Pickets were later